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Northern Review

of Writing and the Arts in Canada

- **POEMS BY**

  ANNE HEBERT, JAMES KIRKUP,
  GAEL TURNBULL AND OTHERS

- **STORIES BY**

  DOROTHY ROBERTS, RALPH GUSTAFSON,
  AND CHARLES EDWARD EATON

- **REVIEWS BY**

  W. W. E. ROSS, BELLE POMER,
  NEIL COMPTON AND GEOFFREY ASHE

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Northern Review

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DOROTHY ROBERTS

Three Poems

AUTUMN DRIVE

The golden tree and the stream splashed with vermilion,
The man at the woodpile, the child pressed to the window,
We seize them and toss them away — we are like autumn —
We whirl them a moment in our sight, and then let go.

The grey farm buildings, the life grown from the mountains,
Beaten into mountain by weather that will never stop,
Even the grey farms are let go like the asters,
Are held awhile in the years, and then let drop.

Plucked orchards and chilling fields we cast behind us,
Seizing, discarding like the wind, the frost.
The child at the window presses to watch our passing,
And when we are gone sees the leaves driven and lost.

AT SEA

I know you now, Wind, now that I am at sea,
You in your element — water; house and tree
You heave and howl at, rushing round and through,
But never are complete with, wildly new.

Here now I meet you mated under me
With water — awful union — privacy
That twists my unheeded bunk, lashes the porthole
Drowns out the strain and engines roll on roll.

Round me your union with the water hurls,
Cries high and plunges, sleeps an instant, swirls,
And rises curving — holds me lost, askew
While my mind struggles out to close round you.

THE SUN, OUR FIRE

Rolling towards the sun, the edge of earth
Grows golden, glows where stars had let it freeze,
And suddenly becomes a blazing hearth
Behind the screen of trees.

Later we'll find a rock warmed by the sun
Or sunny grass and feel in vein and pore
Our intimacy with fire though we shun
Even the wish to dream into the core.

Though we are made of the refracted light
We cannot look . . . Now the sun blazes through
The screen of trees, and burns the curious sight
And dries away our questioning with the dew.

D. G. JONES

AT TWILIGHT IN THE PARK

I watched a young boy hug a tree,
And lay his cheek upon the bark,
Then sadly draw his hands away
And spring and run a noisy race
    Through the shadows home.

I watched a young girl kiss a stone,
And smooth her hands about its face,
And hold it loving as her own,
Then race across the evening lawn,
    And skip away toward home.

An old man there no stone embraced,
And an old woman loved no tree.
I watched their pale hands hesitate
And fumble twice and twice embrace,
And watched their lips the worn sounds make,
And saw their parting marred by speech.
Their loves like stone I saw transfixed
In time and space. And each alone
Within a silent ruin of words,
Across the dark and flowing grass
    Moved slowly home.

GAEL L. TURNBULL

Five Poems

A SONG

I have set my heart so high
That no song ever may,
Rising on the longest day,
Reach to where
I look down upon the sky
— but my heart there
is uncertain air, air.

I have set my heart so far
That no eye ever can,
Searching with the widest scan,
Find out where
I am near behind some star
— but my heart there
is uncertain air, air.

I have set my heart so wild
That no one ever shall,
Given the impossible,
Know just where
I am still like a child
— but my heart there
is uncertain air, air.

TO THE POINT FOR ONCE

I made one cry of terror
That day upon the lake
And it had an earnest sound,
When I was no longer able
And thought that I must drown.
O that was an honest shout
When the dark came up beneath me
And I saw the light go out:

O I loved the sunshine dearly
When the water bubbled close about my mouth.

IN A STRANGE CITY

In a strange city
The roofs are darker,
The streets narrower,
The corners farther,
And my legs are brooms
(With toes of pebble)
Sweeping a multiplying
Harlequin pattern
Of necessary furrows
On capsized mountains
Of desiccated sidewalks;
And everywhere about me —
Children burst
Into feet and echoes
Like flags or goblins:
The eyes of the women
Are suspended, electric
Heavy with silence
Like the fingers of the air
In the gap before the thunder:
And men demand answers
And turn away their shoulders
Into caves full of furniture,
Machinery or ledgers,
Like tortoises in beehives
With axes in each cupboard.

Thus I walk, I talk,
In a strange city —
So much, so many,
To encounter, to remember.
But that is not the end.
The city alters
And change is the strangest
In that once strange city —
Roofs are lifted,

Streets grow wider,
Corners come together,
Sidewalks are ploughed,
Children furled,
A woman brings me rain,
Cupboards fill with bread,
And my name is planted;
And I begin to populate
With common-place and habit
The soon familiar city.

A POEM IS A PEARL

The mind is an oyster;
And poetry is its habit
Of accretion upon strangeness
Explored within the mouth
And measured by contagion,
Haphazard as the sand
That grows by irritation
Within the tightened shell
That sucks upon the ocean,
As public and as hidden
And vain as is a woman
That knows herself by others
And leans upon their eyes,
As subtle as the flavor
Of names upon a journey,
As deliberate as mirrors
That cast the sun away
Yet alter with the gazer,
As restless as the tongue,
And personal as spittle.

EXILE

Those hills to me
Are not the hills you see
But are the margin of that dark country
Where distance is, and soundlessly
The mountains drift into the sea
Beyond those hills where I would be.

A Patriotic Ballet

Dorothy Roberts

Something wonderful happened to Miss Bigg as the war progressed — that is, to Miss Flora Bigg. Her little dancing class that in a small way augmented the inherited income meagrely supporting herself and her sister May expanded with the influx of London and foreign families, and took on a wartime patriotic air until at last it became the Patriotic Ballet.

"This way — that way," sang out Miss Bigg at rehearsal ("rehearsal" having now supplanted "class") joining in the steps herself for all her jouncing bulk in purple. "One, two — point the toe — pirouette . . ." And about her in the double room stripped of furniture circled and spun the many little girls with a decreasing awkwardness that surely promised success. Yes, even in their ordinary clothes they looked promising of success.

And well they might, for the day grew close when all her organizing and new prominence must come to fruit in the Ballet at the Opera House. No less than the Opera House was being loaned — she had managed it — for the event, and the proceeds were going to benefit the boys doing the fighting.

Mistakes now were more than she could bear. She pounced when she saw one, though it was committed only by a Colony — not even a Dominion — "Out of step! How dare you when It is only a week off — after all my efforts . . ."

She shook the offender. The dancing faltered. She clapped her hands for it to progress. From a corner Miss May Bigg quickened her fingers on the piano keys. But the dance still moved in stiff and nervous precision, even when England left the ranks for her own separate and more complicated steps, the most spectacular steps of the whole Patriotic Ballet.

"No, no," Miss Bigg cried, "put the zest in — this way — this way . . ." And she did a flurry of England's steps, toppling above them.

England tittered. Distinctly Miss Bigg heard it. She swelled. England paused defiant in mid-step. Mauve spread over Miss Bigg's face like a stain from her dress. But she held the outrage in, she held it. This was England, her chosen, the ardent child, the gifted, who—along with her management — would bring the Ballet to success. And faster

and faster came the music, sprightlier and sprightlier till at last the dance was lifted and carried by it over the precarious moment, on, on, whirling about the double room, England, the others all at their best now, weaving and spinning on towards the performance in the Opera House.

The children loved the music played by Miss May Bigg. Without it they could not have changed the sharp commands of Miss Flora Bigg into gay steps and patterns. They loved Miss May Bigg herself and called her Little Miss Bigg out of affection. And most of all they loved the dresses she sewed for the Ballet.

Beautiful dresses she sewed of fluffy gauze, each with the flag of one of the nations or lands represented draped over a shoulder of the tight bodice. In these brief flaring dresses were represented all the allied countries and their possessions.

"Careful, careful, they're only basted," Miss May Bigg cried, as the little girls crowded about her for excited try-ons — "Stand still, stand still . . ." as they strained to see in the mirror.

Such a mountain of dresses — most only basted — and how could she ever get them all finished in time? Often her eyes and her fingers and her back were quite worn out with the effort of supporting her sister's irridescent success. Often she hoped the war would not last, and remembered with wistfulness the days of the little classes before Patriotism, before her sister grew difficult with prominence.

Yet when the little girls came hopping in their white waists and drawers for the try-ons, squeeling in delight, "Me first — me first . . . Oh, Little Miss Bigg, how pretty!" her heart grew warm and she took their spry light kisses with intensity.

The child Betty, who was England, was the most exuberant, the most exquisite. Her arms and legs were not so gangling, but quite shaped with their skill. In the puff of dress, the flare of flag, made, arranged with such care and effort, she preened and pirouetted longest before the mirror, and was a flame within it. Miss May Bigg watched, and waited for the hug and kiss that would suddenly brim over from the child's delight in herself.

"Now then!" clapped Miss Flora Bigg from the doorway, "back to business — back to business! You've the dresses fitted, May — you can work on them later. Another rehearsal now, Children — Our Patriotic Ballet is less than a week off, and it's got to be perfect — perfect!" And all the little girls, still involved in themselves and the dresses and the long shining mirror, were herded back into the dancing steps.

Even England's balking at being snatched from the mirror, her purposeful making of a misstep, Miss Floral Bigg was able to sweep over in her need to reach success. So often she had wanted to slap England back into the ranks — but no, for she knew the child's dancing was one with her hope of triumph. Too long, oh too long obscurity had held her confined, obscurity that she hadn't really noticed when it was with her but now found the very thought of unbearable.

The music came loud to cover the misstep and in a moment England was dancing as she wanted her to, as soon — her acknowledged discovery — she would be dancing on the stage of the Opera House, in the system of her organizing.

On that night Miss Bigg popped from between the crimson curtains. Behind her, behind the curtains, were banked the excited children in their dresses of gauze and flags, her sister May — not needed for music now — set to hush-hush them, though to little avail. Before her were all the faces thrillingly upturned and so numerous, mostly women, of course, for men were often involved in the War right through the evenings, but men too, far more people than just the parents of her performers. "Ladies and Gentlemen . . . this is a Patriotic Ballet . . . We are all trying to win the War — and we hope this will do its bit . . ."

Applause. Applause. She bobbed and bobbed in her best purple, in her prominence, in her almost bursting sense of the change brought to her by the sweep of world events — then back behind the curtains out of sight. In a moment the curtains parted on the scene of flag-colored pillars, backdrop of sea, a throne; and into this scene came dancing the Allies, one after one in climatic order, each in her puff of dress, her flag tossing as she did her special dance — to orchestra music now — every step proclaiming many rehearsals.

Each as she finished stayed on the stage, poised precariously with a toe pointed, arms extended . . . And now England — England!

Behind the scenes Miss Flora Bigg huffing and directing, hissing down the whispering and jiggling, spied an act to enrage her — England was standing with her face pressed to a crack in the scenery, ignoring her entrance cue, apparently peering out at the audience, all the Dominions and Colonies gathered behind her.

Automatically Miss Bigg descended — "Get on there, you — on that stage!" She was ignored. "Get on . . ."

"I'm looking for my mother," the child said, distracted, still peering.

"Why you . . . Get on this instant!" Here was the moment of moments that must go right, and England ruining it.

The child turned and looked at her and said, "No!" Their wills met at last head on. Met while she swelled, while she boiled and the Dominions and Colonies drew back from pressing towards the crack to stare in awe at the audacity, in wonder and admiration staring.

She grabbed the defiant shoulder set between her and success, the shoulder flaunting the flag of England, shook it in desperation. She shook blindly, until she saw the flag loose in her hand and torn.

From beyond the scenery she could hear the murmur, the half-stifled laughter of the audience as it waited. And here she stood in horror, in sudden utter deflation, staring at the loose flag, the flag torn in her hand, the collapse of all her work and aspiration. She saw herself abandoned now not only by success but by the Nation, the War itself. She began to whisper hoarsely, "Get my sister — get my sister . . ."

And from the dressing room, tugged along by a Dominion, came Little Miss Bigg with her needle poised. "Now, Betty, stand still a moment — and then hurry, hurry my child — everyone's waiting for England!"

While Miss Flora Bigg swayed numbly she saw the needle darting, the fingers of her sister flashing dryly, saw the flag perked again on the shoulder, then quickly the line headed by England forming, swinging into step onto the stage to her sister's humming and tapping.

She heard the clapping as she sank to the chair her sister had shoved under her. She heard the music that was for the dance of England muffled, on, on, but, as the fear of defeat released her, getting louder, swinging, spiraling. Now surer, much louder. Now she could follow the music swinging, swooping through all its foot-guiding intricacies until in a triumphant push it broke — oh, rebirth of elation — into a clapping that was really quite tumultuous.

Lifted on the clapping she was at the wing hissing directions while England stood flushed before an audience that soon would be summoning her. Here she hissed unheard, "Now all together — all together . . . the Dance of All Allies now!" And the dance bloomed full over the stage, brimming awareness, the Dance of All Allies she had rehearsed over and over and over.

And so now in the midst of the great mass of war spun this triumphant little world of flag-bedecked countries all co-ordinated about England under the management of Miss Bigg.

JAMES KIRKUP

THE GIANT GOD

There, beyond me in the desert, in the sea's wilderness
Against me, and within me in the sun; impossible,
But true; benevolent, but stern; and happy in the summits of his day,
There is the god, the giant. Though I am lost beside him,
He considers me, with a divine concern, and lets me lie
Securely in the hollow of his neck, as in a harboured boat,
Where I can hear, beneath the golden skin,
The great blood shouting down his veins,
And feel in slumber the working of his throat
That rocks me gently like the wines we revel in.

When we are sleeping, along the mountains of the afternoon,
His breathing echoes mine, the heart he has
Beats no more swiftly than my own; is blenched,
Like mine, with the alarm the hunters sound,
Throbs harder with the drums' excitement, rages
With the anger of desire, pants in fierce games,
Is calmed by sleep and music, made to ache by hope.
When he moves, at night, he seems to make the stars descend
Behind the hillside of a shoulder. He is the wave that drowns
And saves. He shows me how I should behave.

It is for him, holding out his arms, to let the sun
Appear, or no. His ribbed flanks are the dunes
Of the high seas moving under the flowing
Robes of water, and his limbs are rivers
That pour from the lake at the centre of the world,
Run through the deltas of his hands and feet into
The sun's drenched hair. His grave lips.
Smile, and are parted, and within
Their rosy labyrinths the tongue's mute eloquence,
The white-on-crimson of the teeth mysteriously promise.

Sometimes he takes me in his hand,
And brings me to his level eyes, whose lashes
Fan me with visions that are gales of glances.
All my days are there: in their immortal sky I see
My mortal self, held high above a blue and blinding pool
That clouds with dazzled lids, and clears
With laughter, weeps with rains of stars. No word
Is spoken, and we have no names, or anything.
He is the giant, and the god. I am the bird whose forest
and whose tree he is,
And that he teaches, with eternal silences, to briefly sing.

The White Queen

Charles Edward Eaton

I was new at the Gloria. The First Secretary in charge of housing the officers told me it was the only good hotel near the Embassy and that I had better stay there in the interests of my work. I took his advice since I was anxious to do the right thing, but I soon found out that most of the young, unmarried men lived at the swankier Copacabana, a long, languid drive from the Embassy, and I wondered if he had sensed in me a difference as though, perhaps, I should be closer to the center of indoctrination.

In any case, it was a happy choice for me. Apart from the comfort and beauty of the Hotel — it was done in the grand old manner with capacious salons and rooms throughout, giving the sense of old fertilities still potent in its structure, nowhere suggestive of the white sterility of so many "modern" interiors. I was glad to find that it housed a great number of my countrymen, not just the Embassy clique, but travellers, business men, and a few "permanents," and I was interested in observing the American abroad, almost as though I had not quite been able to get his essence at home — sometimes I wondered if that had not been a motive in my entering the Foreign Service, though I must confess that this interest in people, this fascination with observing them, particularly those who seemed to have "lived," had always been a mania of mine even in the States. I suppose I was looking for various ways to attach my allegiance, for embodiments of certain things which I wanted to believe important.

I was a little surprised at the deference with which I was treated at the Gloria. Used to the brisk, brusque treatment I had often had in the hotels at home, increasing an inherent feeling of insubstantiality, of not having been seen, I was delighted to indulge in the impression of "being somebody." I told myself that it was because I was good-looking, that I looked the part of the young, affluent, American careerist (for, you see, that part of me had always been certain — I had evidently been born with mirrors hung around me like a portable setting, and those pleasing reflections were the only solid conception I had). In

any event, every attention was paid me until I felt that I had entered a new world of manners where people "swept" through life, bowing and being bowed to, and I didn't care to go into the subject of motive too deeply at the moment, partly, perhaps, because of the obscurity of my own possible reactions.

The *maitre d'hotel,* a handsome, ceremonious sort who did as much for my ego as anyone there, gave me a table to myself, off the main dining *salon,* in a favored nook which was protected and yet had a generous view of what went on among the diners. The fact that during the first few weeks I often had to dine alone did not bother me at all for there was the exciting spectacle of the people, some of whom I could "possess" and dispose of in an instant, but others, the "opaque ones," I called them, were singled out for further consideration and "study." To me this position of privileged observation was an elegant echo of a fantasy I used to enjoy as a boy when I sat in the car waiting for my mother to return from shopping and watched "faces," giving them names, characters, and destinies. To be able to continue this form of exploratory appraisal among people whom I might yet get to know gave me perhaps some sense of progress which was one of the things I was worried about.

It was, I believe, the second day at lunch, when my focus on my surroundings was clearer and more particular, that I first noticed the old lady whom, reverting to the habit of long ago, I immediately called "the White Queen" because of her striking lordliness, the imperial manner in which she swept into the *salon,* took in everything at a glance, noting all changes, and sat down promptly in her nook within a nook, an extreme corner of the room where several ornate columns cloistered her regally without obstructing her panorama. You could see that she was an "old-timer" at the Hotel — if there had been deference for me, there was something sacrosanct in the manner in which she was treated by the *maitre d'hotel* and the waiters. She was obviously an American, one of the whitest and oldest-looking individuals I have ever seen, and it fascinated me to consider how and where all this age and powder-whiteness had come upon her, as though the secret of national senescence might be concentrated in her, distilled, as it were, in the alembic of the tropics. Her body, surprisingly slender and "springy," was not congruent with her head, as though she had once been decapitated and physically refurbished with an older countenance, for her face was bound in a network of wrinkles, stretching even across the nose to the ears, up to the roots of the hair,

and disappearing into her dress, not particularly noticeable on her arms and hands, as though some tremendous will had stanched their further progression.

I noticed how she watched the movements of the waiter, sometimes smiling at something that pleased her. Her eyes were bright, unaged, and of as indeterminate color as those of a bird. There was a kind of dry, white effulgence emanating from her, and the lithe, dark waiter seemed a sensuous and encroaching shadow which she alternately wooed and repulsed. I saw him spill a little sugar on the table, and immediately a shrill barrage of heavily accented Portugese came chattering out of her mouth while she began to fidget and flutter, and I characterized her as a *rara avis,* a very old, white bird of a woman sacred to herself and apparently to others. But this image did not last for I was to see her, as I did not then know, in innumerable changes and avatars, an elusive chameleon-form of memory and imagination. The slender shadow of the waiter bent over her, as obsequiously pliant as an overhanging tree, and the anger drained from her face, leaving it more supple with life. Then she smiled, and I could have sworn that she looked twenty years younger, so positive she was in regaining her manner and composure, looking around the room with cool arrogance like someone who had been accustomed to please. I was used to the inconstancy of the human face, my own included, a factor in the sensation of the illusory character of things I sometimes experienced (That was why, I suppose, I had become an unobtrusive "starer."), but I was not prepared for such variability in an old face, for, after all, I told myself, it, at least, should be "set".

I knew that she had been immediately aware of my presence — such eyes as hers sharpen themselves upon the minute perception of the world around them, growing keener with age — and I was certain that she glanced my way from time to time. It seemed that she looked more histrionic, more assuredly the *grande dame* at intervals during lunch, and I had a notion that it was when she was aware of my furtive scrutiny. When our eyes met first, a fleeting trace of a smile, like the condescension of royalty, passed over her face, but the second time her gaze paused longer, and I felt myself completely enveloped in her concentration which broke into a freer smile, brushed with a nuance of coquettishness. She was inviting me to admire her! That I could see. The impish, little, albino monkey (for now that was the momentary image) was trying to radiate its force across the room in a travesty of seductiveness, commanding the blandishment of my attention. And,

strangely, there was something hypnotic about her smile, charged with an old, tireless, inexhaustible habit of allurement. She believed that her beauty endured, and there was a force of memory and confidence that had never given up its transmittal. She looked younger, yes, she did, her features stimulated with intent, and it was an easy thing, in the trance of a new impression, to see the face rebuild itself, like slow-motion played backwards, until she was to me something more of what her own conception might have been. It highlighted a conflict of mine to see that the way a person thought of himself, if it were dynamic enough, might partly produce the aura he walked in for others.

II

Several weeks had passed, and I had come to know "the White Queen," although my understanding of her, it seemed, had scarcely begun. From my first awareness of her, I had been fascinated. She was surely one of those who had "lived" — she had something to teach me if only I could know her. There must have been a "secret" and a "struggle" in her life — her face said that — and with my old desire for penetration into human character I was determined to find out. If I discovered what her great moments had been, her crises, defeats, and victories, it might indicate to me how the graph of a human life evolved, for I was undecided about all these things.

I made discreet inquiries concerning her at the desk, among friends and even chance acquaintances with whom I had seen her talking, for her presence in the Hotel was pervasive, and these facts emerged: Her name was Mrs. Edward Estlin, and she was the widow of a U. S. Steel executive. Estlin's work had kept them in Brazil for some years, and then they had left suddenly under the hushed rumor of scandal, something about a young Brazilian army officer and Mrs. Estlin. "*Une petite histoire d'amour*," one of the Brazilian residents of the Hotel told me with a twinkle in his eye. And just before the war, she had returned, "for good," so she said. "She's *muito rico,* terribly rich, you know," another Brazilian said, as though that meant wise and worthy as well.

I was not surprised to find the local appraisal full of deference and tolerance, for the Brazilian has more avuncular respect than the American. America is the land for the young if they know what they

want, and I rather expected the boisterous Navy lieutenant to say: "Sure I know old lady Estlin. She's the one, you know, who shacked up with one of these niggers down here. With all her high falutin' airs, just think of the old biddy doing that." And Carleton Andrews, a second-rate lecturer on America, sponsored by the Cultural Relations office of the Embassy, told me shortly after a snub from Mrs. Estlin: "I'm leaving the Gloria. They ought to rake some of those old mummies out from behind the columns. Like that Estlin bitch. You know what she told me? Said I was doing more harm than good down here. She's a fine one to go around putting on airs anyway. They say she liked some of these brown boys around town. Used to be a regular old whore, I hear." His story made me smile for I could imagine her, angry, scornful, hard as an old powder horn exploding in the face of the soft, silly Mr. Andrews who had perhaps neglected to speak to her one fine morning as he marched along, like a missionary among the blacks, thinking very powerful thoughts about his next speech on the grand old subject of democracy.

But everything I heard was vague or vituperative. I looked her up in the Hotel Register and found that she had a New York address, and noticed with a mixture of feelings that her apartment was directly beneath my room. Our acquaintance from day to day had grown by nods and bows, and smiles that never quite met, but I had come to want to really know her and even to like her, and I was glad when she made the first overture, stopping me as I passed her table: "Oh, this is Mr. Anthony Donovan, isn't it? Well, I'm Mrs. Estlin." She extended a hand in a quick, grasping, bird-like gesture. "I understand you're new here, and I want to get to know you. Do sit down and talk awhile." Evidently it was a "little girl's day" somewhere in her moods, for she was dressed in a puffy and flimsy, pale pink dress, and her face had been made up in a doll-like fashion.

"I'm very glad to know you Mrs. Estlin. I've heard a lot about you," was about all I could get out before she began to play all of the forces of her personality upon me at once. I was amazed to find that she talked about the present constantly with only here and there a name out of the past, like a jewel suddenly turned on her nervous fingers blinding me with its associations, so that the present seemed all the more in her command. She asked me a great many questions about myself and began subtly to give me compliments, but all the time I felt she was thinking about someone else, someone she thought should exist. "The Embassy needs young men of your sort, Mr. Don-

ovan," she would say, and I found her manner as suave as an Ambassador's wife appraising the staff. "We have so many of the wrong kind of Americans coming down here. No distinction whatever. Have you met that outrageous Mr. Andrews? Cultural Relations, indeed. He's the laughing-stock of Rio." She looked cruel, feeling herself then, one could see, very much the white goddess of judgment so that all of the straining power of her wrinkles seemed to have gathered into the deep furrow between her eyebrows. But I felt that she was right. Surely she knew what the Brazilians would feel, for wasn't she the oldest American in Rio, didn't she have the cumulative, backward look which was the only proper justification of authority? And I admired the authority in her voice, the varying, mobile manifestations of herself, each assured, and her ability to imprint these impressions on me — could she really becloud my vision, I wondered? — but I had not discovered the central source of her strength, the buoyant principle beneath all the years.

I tried to imagine what impression I had really made on her — this was very important to me. I knew I had a fine frame (over six feet tall, and strongly built — "a fine figure of a man," according to my grandmother, although it was strange how small I often felt), there was excellent bone structure in my face, and I had a good vital crop of dark-auburn hair and soft gray eyes. This I knew from the cage of mirrors in which I lived, but there was a discrepancy somewhere, for I could never synchronize my feelings with the convergence of reflections. Each view of my physical self, which I had thought about many times, suggested something different, and its inner echo was incongruent. Now, as always, I could see myself sitting with this old but oddly changing, withered and unwithering lady, and I was attentive, complaisant, and apparently charmed, but, as nearly always, there was a shadow in the picture, something in the reflection I did not understand, as though there might be the meaning of the little scene itself, as though there were some one unknown within me who was meant to comment upon that *tête à tête* and its hanging shadow, as upon thousands of others in the past, but had never learned to speak, so this picture, like all the rest, had no name.

The luncheon finished with pleasantries, and I could see that the young, auburn-haired man had afforded the white, columnar lady a "*divertissement.*" I had listened for the "wheres," the "whens," the "hows," and the "whys," throughout her conversation, as I would always do. But I still had only the slightest notion of who she was.

If I found out, I told myself, it would help me, I felt sure, in some way which was still vague to me and intellectually undetermined.

When I left her, I ceased to worry about her or myself — I had gone far enough for the time being. I felt content to be the auburn-haired young man who was making friends so rapidly, who lived in a pleasant world where nothing seemed to bar his entrance. There were these momentary congruencies when the man in the mirror was myself. I looked out of the great French doors which opened on to the broad, front terrace of the Hotel. The whole girth of the building was sashed in with the blue of the sea as though its impulse were toward spilling itself in the fluent motion of the water. A wind was blowing, and everything felt drawn in its current toward the funnel of the mountains at the end of the bay, and beyond was the great whorl-mouth of the open ocean. The entire city seemed to pour toward that opening, I with it, as though the eternity of the water with its blue nirvana were waiting for us all, and I felt fluid and gliding, and the burden of longing for some stasis within was for the time lost in the swoon of that strange beckoning.

III

After a few weeks, the Ambassador sent me to Manaus, a lost, torpid, little town in the north of Brazil on the Amazon. I was sent ostensibly to appraise the state of the Consulate there, determine the need of any further personnel, and make a report of its progress in general, but I had the feeling I was given the job because the Ambassador did not know what else to do with me at the moment. A wily and heartless, old manipulator, he moved his officers into position like a chess player, and I disliked to be around him for he had the eye of a devil for what was not in a man. At any rate, I sensed that he thought I had not "fitted in," or rather that he had failed with me as though an amorphous substance had eluded the mold of his hand and that I was to be sent into the hinterlands to see Rio at a distance and know how much I should lose if I lost it permanently.

Manaus meant absolutely nothing to me until the fact that it didn't began actually to unnerve me. I went through my routine with the officials of the Consulate in a listless manner, hazily laying away certain facts to convey to the Ambassador. All was somnolence and

torpor and the realization of how prone and limp man had become in such an environment. With nothing combatting the surrounding jungle, there was a prevailing atmosphere of the ancient mire of life in which it was necessary to delve one's sensations in the only discernable drive, the will to live, shared by the rest of the pulsating animal world.

I longed for Rio which, once as lush loose as a full-blown flower, seemed now hard and white as a jewel, a diamond-center of civilization which alone could have made that jungle meaningful. An experience, more painful to me perhaps than to another, was the feeling expressed in a line remembered from Shakespeare "that wisdom cries out in the streets, and no man regards it." Truth, Honor, Justice, Love — these were words I had thought I might find a better meaning for in a foreign country, finally giving up the Foreigh Service, perhaps, settling wherever I possessed the security of that knowledge. "Chalice-terms," some professor back home had called them, but here in Manaus, more than in Rio, they were as dry as empty gourds.

My friends I missed most of all, though in missing them I suppose I missed myself. I spent much of my free time away from the Consulate trying to remember them in detail and how I had been with them. The fellows at the Embassy — what did we stand for together? — Perla Azevedo, my new girl, incomparable dancer and gay companion but haunting and elusive friend. Most often I thought of "the White Queen," for, in the weeks before I left Rio, she had forged so many images of herself upon my consciousness. I hadn't seen her for any length of time on any given occasion — there was too much divergence in our ages for that — but, daily, in passing, I met her, and with the quick power of her personality she made herself memorable. I recalled her in countless ways: as the old white bird, the impish albino monkey, sometimes silent, hard, and ungiving as a death's head, sometimes in the old costume of what was once a *femme fatale,* she was like a yellow rose pressed at its full-blown peak in a book too many years ago. Or, in the rich pleasure of her own personality, she was often like a fountain, pluming whitely, freely, and clearly, watering the ground around it, an unflagging, abundant source of life, confounding its detractors. Or, again, upon special occasion, in another reminiscent fashion, she wore a fillet around her white curls, and she could have been, in the glow of her own illusion, Juno, Minerva, or Venus.

I wanted to believe in the best of her story, to think that she embodied a scarred nobility, that she had sacrificed herself in some

passionate and beautiful ordeal. It was Love, the highest and least known to me of all the worrisome words, that I wished to attach to her. She had broken her life over an impossible affair, and had left in disgrace, returning to Rio as one always wishes to return to the place where one has truly "lived." I should prefer to believe that until such time as her secret would be mine. Whatever doubt and discord there was in my conception, her occasional arrogance, a sudden remark of chilling calculation, were glossed over and stored in the repository of nameless and unspoken suppositions which I had accumulated during the years. I knew that she had watched my appreciation grow and was pleased as a clever teacher might have been with an indulgent and willing pupil. Often, as we became less formal, she watched my eyes intently when I seemed to be dreaming in her presence, and I knew she was aware of their gray vacuity as though they might be filled with various sorts of soul. "Ah, Mr. Donovan," she would say. "You have the eyes of the dreamer. Be careful. Don't let yourself be the prey of the dreamless."

I finished my work in Manaus as rapidly as possible, the "report" comfortably couched in its Departmental clichés, and was on my way back. The coming reunion with my friends promised a true rehabilitation. I could see them coming to meet me, bringing back things I had lost. "Oh, Tony, you have been away so long," Perla would say, returning to me the motions and manners of our relationship until I was once again myself mixed with Perla. "Tell me all about it," she would continue, and I would have the thrilling sensation so rare for me, that she also sought to recapture some part of herself. And the fellows at the Embassy would ask me about the trip jocosely, scornfully, or enviously, and perhaps they would reveal what there was that was new in me. But Mrs. Estlin would be the center of the return for, whereas Manaus was without age and without humanity, she was full of the years of man, and I looked forward to our reunion, for I felt that there was still so much to be learned from her.

The plane was late, and we got into Rio long after dark, but I could sense the city powerfully beneath me, the strings of light like little, pulsing, jewel-dynamos of its life, and all the tentacles of my sensation spread out to embrace it. Tomorrow there would be once again the old, recovered life with its new accretions yet to be claimed from the recognition of others. As I thought of the new blending of myself with the old associations, I felt an odd mixture of feelings welling up in me again: the longing to "stay" and the longing to "go".

In the morning, there would be the view of the sea from the Hotel and the winds and their nisus toward the channel of the mountains, the throat of the cornucopia, which poured its faces and figures, like blossoms and fruits, into blue nothingness beyond. Yet something in me, a ghost of the real, would be standing on the terrace with waving hand, incurved, saying: "Wait, wait," even as now my hands grasped the arms of the seat in the silver plane that was falling like a bauble into that braided flow of pleasure and regret.

After a light snack in town, for I knew that the dining room at the Gloria would be closed, I went directly to the Hotel and prepared for bed. As I lay in my bed, I felt turbulent with memories of Manaus, what I had probably missed, remembering the irony of my disinterest while I was there. I was disturbed with the fact that at least parts of my experience seemed to have no value until they were past or until they had been recreated or given substance by the relating of them to others. What would happen as time passed if, habituated to recall as the necessary matrix of the emergence of that mythic being of strength, wisdom, and beauty which was always yet to be born in me, I could no longer draw assurance of its manifold nature, its inevitable coming, from those around me who had always been its heralds and perhaps the masks of its Protean soul? Had I not always believed, like Joyce's Stephen Dedalus, that I desired "to press in my arms the loveliness which has not yet come into the world"? Or, was this only a way of telling myself the romance of things I would never do?

It was an unusually hot, still night, and I found I could not sleep. Since the forms of things were submerged in darkness, I decided, as I had often done before, to interest myself in the "sounds of life" with that sensuous avidity which had never forsaken me. On this particular night, my room seemed a very high perch, as though I were in a tree-house, and I could hear the night-birds close by, outside the window, and breathing up like a slow exhalation (since there was no wind) was the never-to-be-forgotten smell of the hill behind the Hotel, its jungle-nature only half-concealed — it was the scent of root, lubricant dampness, and the voluptuous earth. A part of me sensed the pungent presence like the dark form of a lover, but something else cried out, "Is this, then, all?"

I was distracted from my causerie with the night by one of the "sounds of life" which I had been wooing. I thought there was an animal in the woods nearby at first. It was a strange crooning, like a

muttering of witchcraft from some dark cave. I lay quite still until I realized that it was the sound of a human voice and that it came from the room directly beneath mine.

When the explosion of surprise cleared from my mind, for I had never heard a single sound emerging from below, until it had, indeed, become for me a "secret chamber," I heard her voice speaking in a mixture of English and Portuguese which seemed to increase its wantonness: "*Meu amor,* my love, my love. You're a Beauty, *uma belaza.* Never forget that . . . never, never forget that . . . Look how the young American beats his wings around you, *meu amor,* my beauty. Like Edward before he started to forget . . . Edward who would have forgotten, my beauty, until you taught him to remember with Armando. Ah, Armando who broke his heart for you, my beauty. Who cried and wished to kill himself because you did not love him. But he was like an empty gun in your hand, of no use anymore, so what could you do, *meu amor,* my love? . . . But still they come, these Brazilians, dark, ugly, and loathsome . . . but still they come. The flower still has its perfume . . . The Americans neglect you, eh? . . . but, ah, there is Mr. Donovan . . . have you not captured his soul, my beauty? Is he not yours, my love?"

There was a sound of hands that were patting and pummeling flesh, and I could see her seated at her boudoir table in a cosmetic ritual, the ceremony of mummification long drawn out through all the years. The lamp would accentuate the whiteness with all corrosive rouge and paint removed, the cleaning tissue lying about like blood-smeared rags, and there she sat, unrelenting and supreme, the sovereign of her long and savage "struggle." Her room, I thought, if only she could see it, was hung with nothing but masks of victims, death's heads of all her selves which she had killed.

Next morning I moved to another floor on the other side of the Hotel with the idea of changing permanently to the Copacabana as soon as it were feasible. No one could deny that it was a more beautiful Hotel or that it could offer me more in the long run. It was full of glitter and grace, a center of youth and endless activity and, perhaps, I would find an answer there for all my foolish indecisions. I remembered the elegant salons full of mirrors, and I could see myself there in the evening, dressed in my best for dancing, with Perla, white-gowned and shining in diamonds, the two of us together, walking quickly along as though life had no end of brilliance.

ALLISTER MacDONALD

TRISTRAM

The dull white sails still follow.
The wind is stirred and curved through hollow hands.
The warped sea goes on
Breaking almost to white.

The taut cords continually
Undo the sea-silences.
The sea shrinks to a face's breadth.

Judgment before landfall;
Before the shallow movement
Where the sea buffets
The colored weeds and sand
In the small bay in Cornwall,
And other twisted legend:
The red prize,
The black sails of Brittany.

ANNE HEBERT

Two Poems

Translated by F. R. Scott

LA FILLE MAIGRE

Je suis une fille maigre,
Et j'ai de beaux os.

J'ai pour eux des soins attentifs
Et d'étranges pitiés.

Je les polis sans cesse
Comme de vieux métaux.

Les bijoux et les fleurs
Sont hors de saison.

Un jour, je saisirai mon amant
Pour m'en faire un reliquaire d'argent.

Je me pendrai
A la place de son coeur absent.

Espace comblé,
Quel est, soudain, en toi, cet hôte sans fièvre?

Tu marches,
Tu remues;
Chacun de tes gestes
Pare d'effroi la mort enclose.

Je reçois ton tremblement
Comme un don.

Et, parfois,
En ta poitrine, fixée,
J'entr'ouvre
Mes prunelles liquides;

Et bougent
Comme une eau verte
Des songes bizarres et enfantins.

THE LEAN GIRL

I am a lean girl
And I have beautiful bones.

I feel strange pity for them
And tend them with great care.

I continually polish them
As though they were old metal.

Now jewels and flowers
Are out of season.

Soon I shall clasp my lover
And make in him a silver shrine.

I shall fasten myself
In the place of his absent heart.

O room so crowded!
What have you suddenly found in this cold guest?

You walk,
You move,
Each of your gestures
Awakes with fear the enclosed death.

Your least trembling
I accept as a gift.

And sometimes
In your breast, very still,
I half open
My liquid eyes

While rare and childish dreams
Flow
Like green water.

EN GUISE DE FETE

Le soleil luit,
Le soleil luit,
Le monde est complet
Et rond le jardin.

J'ai allumé
Deux chandelles,
Deux feux de cire,
Comme deux fleurs jaunes.

Le jour pourrit
Les feux de nuit;
Deux fleurs fanées
Aux blanches tiges d'église;

Le monde est en ordre,
Les morts dessous,
Les vivants dessus.

Les morts me visitent,
Le monde est en ordre,
Les morts dessous,
Les vivants dessus.

Les morts m'ennuient,
Les vivants me tuent.

J'ai allumé
Deux fleurs tremblantes,
J'ai pris mes yeux
Dans mes mains
Comme des pierres d'eau,

Et j'ai dansé
Les gestes des fous,
Autour de mes larmes,
En guise de fête.

A MASK FOR A HOLIDAY

Down pours the sun,
Down pours the sun,
The earth is fulfilled,
The garden is round.

I have lighted
Two candles,
Two wax flames
Like two yellow flowers.

Daylight destroys
The fires of night,
Two faded flowers
On the white stalks of the church.

The world conforms,
The dead below,
The living above.

The dead visit me,
The world conforms,
The dead below,
The living above.

The dead bore me,
The living kill me.

I have lighted
Two flickering flowers,
I have taken my eyes
In my hands
Like two pebbles of water,

And I have danced
Idiot steps
Around my tears,
This holy day.

Poetry and Frogs

W. W. E. Ross

Any recurring object or theme may be selected as a touchstone of poetic style. That noisy rural object the frog may be so used, as well as, selectively, eaten.

One of the original imagists, John Gould Fletcher, in his "Down the Mississippi," "The Moon's Orchestra" section, refers to it thus:

Crickets churr
Against the stark reiteration of the rusty flutes which frogs
Puff at from rotted logs
In the swamp.

This is, distinctly, the frog as frog, the flute being so well worn as to be almost a natural member.

After imagism the "modern idiom" became intellectually embellished by a free deployment of tropes. Made more piquant, more stimulating, the presentation or statement should have greater "resonance" than the merely exact imagistic one. (Paradoxically, imagism didn't favor imagery — figures of speech, tropes.)

A glittering image is found in Raymond Souster's "Green Wonderful Things," a short poem in which a certain hostility to the "green wonderful things" is expressed:

Under the full-rounded moon
The frogs blink green-eyed moons

In Louis Dudek's "The Pool of Night" the object of hostility is not the "green things" but "night". This brief poem, which deserves quoting in full, begins:

That cold croaking frog, night,
is different here under the trees
from night, the speckled snake of the streets.

This excellent piece, with its ending, "Digest me, frog, or I will digest you," seems to me to strike an almost mythical note, with something of the bravado of the legendary opponent of the powers of darkness; Perseus, Bellerophon, the knight errant against the dragon or giant, or Hiawatha in conflict with the evil magician Pearl Feather.

Going back to the not too remote past in Canadian poetry, we find that Archibald Lampman's poem "The Frogs", begins:

Breathers of wisdom won without a quest,
Quaint, uncouth dreamers, voices high and strange,
Flutist of lands where beauty hath no change,
And wintry grief is a forgotten guest;

and a sonnet, "Frogs", by Roberts begins and continues in part:

Here, in the red heart of the sunset lying,
My rest an islet of brown weeds blown dry,
I watch the wide bright heavens hovering nigh,
My plain and pools in lucent splendors dyeing!
. . .
And all the air is tremulous to the cry
Of myriad frogs on mellow pipes replying.

The contrast is striking, between this pervading fuzziness and the more recent excerpts; and it is obvious that somehow or other Keats' nightingale has made its nest in a Canadian swamp. Here is the frog, not as frog, but as nightingale. Although it was selected by Ligh thall for his "Songs of the Great Dominion", Lampman's poem of ten stanzas, really an ode, is a sort of paraphrase of To a Nightingale and To a Grecian Urn combined in one!

In the pre-Lampman period Charles Mair deals more soberly with the frog, having got no farther than Thomson as model. From "The Fire-flies":

And night's dull, ugly brood is all astir . . .
And, in the hollows where the river lies,
The hoarse frogs sprawl among the bedded reeds,
And croak harsh ditties to their uncouth mates . . .

Here is the frog as eighteenth century lout, no gentleman, living an untidy and ungenteel life in the slums.

Isabella Crawford, surely our best writer of blank verse, is more kindly towards our humbler fauna:

The gay enamell'd children of the swamp
Roll'd a low bass to treble tinkling notes
Of little streamlets leaping from the woods.

(with some redundancy, however, in "little streamlets")

Continuing with longer poems, narrative or dramatic, in which the telling of a story imparts a forward movement, in that new Walpurgisnacht "The Witches' Brew" by E. J. Pratt frogs are ingredients in the witches' cauldron:

Together with some pollywogs,
And kippered hocks of centipedes
And the hind legs of huge bullfrogs
Raked by the millions from the weeds
Of slimy Patagonian bogs.

Here we have the frog as gastronomic object and the wielder of the tool that scoops them up "by millions" is undoubtedly that legendary character Paul Bunyan of all whose exploits exaggeration is the keynote.

In Birney's "David" frogs enter as decorative detail:

. . . we slogged
Through the musky woods, past a swamp that quivered
with frogsong.

It is interesting to note the pessimism of this poem, that of the up-down type of legend in which the hero, instead of making a trip downward or against obstacles, but with a good ending, goes upward at first, like Icarus, and then meets disaster.

In Longfellow's Hiawatha, when Hiawatha travels to fight the evil spirit or semi-divinity Pearl Feather, a power of darkness reached by passing through the sunset along the way traversed by the dead, the frog, appropriately enough, appears in the "black pitch-water", comparable to the mud in Aristophanes' Frogs:

And the bullfrog, the Dahinda,
Thrust his head into the moonlight,
Fixed his yellow eyes upon him,
Sobbed and sank below the surface;

"Sobbed" because quick exhalation of air was necessary for sinking. Here the frog is an actor, a swamp sentinel.

The Frog who would A-wooing Go acts altogether as a human, like the animals in fairy-tales, the children's world of legend. In the grownups' world of legend (e. g. the Greek) we are more likely to see humans turned into animals or plants than animals behaving as humans, whatever the significance of this may be.

The classic frog appearance occurs of course in Aristophanes' Frogs where a chorus of frogs vociferously maintain their right to be heard as sweet lyricists; the author probably intending satire against rival poets.

Longer frog passages tend to anthropomorphism, as if it were difficult to dwell at length on an alien creature without making it at least quasi-human. A certain artificiality enters, the frog being endowed

with a variety of non-frog attributes converging to the human norm in thought and emotion, without restriction to what may seem to be the frog-essence itself.

Analogously, longer poems are, in general, sustained or forwarded, not only by the somewhat artificial (for the "modern idiom" at least) poetic devices of rhythm, rhyme sometimes, etc., but by "normal" human thought, feeling and action, — rather than by the continuous employment of a single element such as an intellectualized imagery, even though this can be claimed the very essence of poetry. One might almost say that, like a startling witticism in conversation, the dazzling image may tend to check momentarily the flow or movement. Cowley, himself the greatest victim of wit-poetry where the wit was, unlike Pope's, not good enough, wrote: "Rather than all things Wit, let none appear". This dictum may, of courses, be ambiguous in its application to the considerable volume of verse definable as wit-poetry without wit.

Cowley failed in attempting to make a long poem depend mainly on the ingenuities of his shorter pieces. The moment is limited, when the frog can sit still in his pool. With its extension, he must do more than pipe — or croak — however brilliantly. The frog must dance.

GEORGE WALTON

A DIET FOR CERTAIN POLITICIANS

The roses Apuleius sought
Would here and now be sought in vain,
But did they in this country grow
Their magic seed I'd seek and sow
  In every street and lane.

I'd pray these politicians there
With appetites might all repair
And eat, and eat and eat again —
And be translated into men.

The Paper-spike

Ralph Gustafson

He sat waiting for his wife at one of the tables along the wall of the small crowded restaurant — his thoughts accumulating around his nerves like ash.

Even the beginning — wasn't it? — had been the same. Tender, submissive, his own passion sensuously blind to the fact that never once had Judith sought what she accepted. Nor since. All of it had been something to be got through — gently, with love for him — but got through.

His fingers went to the paper doily on the table before him, bending the edge of arcs upward along the lines of the punctures — continuing all four sides symmetrically, evenly.

Love without passion. As though their lives, flawed from some bungled trust of beginnings, had groped through the years, without dimension, unstructured, unpossessed. The Love that was also the flesh, inexorable and decreed, and only in the destruction of love, violable. *And He saw that it was good.*

Ever since the beginning, he had watched in Judith the fear, unrecognized by her, the tabu thumbing littlely the uses of shame — the appeal to the door unclosed, a geography, the clock exploited — the shattering prohibition of herself offered. He had come, even, to hate passion, to mistrust what in his love for her was beauty only, spontaneous, sun sudden and there, until it was something twisted into the shape of imagination corrupted, indulged, some unwholesomeness of gland. Had he ever judged a relationship except on its potential of a basis in passion?

Or he judged Judith.

His fingers ripped the edge of paper that was between them, kneading it — pitched it at the ash-tray. The whole of it, the failure that made marriage the sanctified shame love was indecent without — the tolerances — the avoidances — what was the whole of it but Judith innocent? Himself innocent? Victims of a leftover halfbaked puritan brew of Pleasure is Sin whose two thousand years left Genesis the Devil's, *Creator castratus.*

He'd take the poet: *All absolute sensation is religious.*

He lighted a cigarette — exhaling the depth of smoke — put his hand to his eyes, cutting through the manipulation of his thoughts. To hell with himself that Judith should have to live up to it, that he wouldn't let her own kind of love fill. He was got to where he could symbolize a shoelace.

The man with the tin-cup passion, its two bits jingled. Thirty-eight the 'dangerous age'? Ten years, hadn't he?

He looked at his wrist but it was just one o'clock.

He turned, watching the cashier's booth directly to his left. The girl sat behind the low glass partition, dismissing the crocodile of stuffed women. The checks came to her on the desk-top always wrong-way to, exultingly. She switched each around, punched out change, rubber-stamped then impaled the paper on the spike of the holder on the corner of the desk.

Eve of the Small Change . . . Venus of the Booth . . . Take her, for instance. Ennui, of course, as befitted the exclusive milieu — male spectacles, mouth in Stop-Red, hair pulled straight to the bun on the back of the neck, dreamlined breasts, a tight little cross hung in their rubber heaven. Bungled biology and the world gone cold. Nineteen centuries below zero. Mercury dropped and Venus brought to bed with chills . . .

Then he saw Judith.

She stood uncertain at the side of the group waiting for tables, the glimpse of the peaked beret antic, eager, as she looked for him.

He stubbed his cigarette, got up, raising his hand — his love of her, through him like a beginning again. He waited, arrogant with what he knew would happen. Her eyes turned, discovered him — clarions rampant and Jericho down!

He went toward her, filled with her sensation; bent to her cheek.

"Darling, there's people!"

He felt his emotion slap shut; instead, took the parcel she carried.

She moved through the access he made between the table and the cashier's booth, sat down — relaxing against the banquette with a catch of relief. "The snow outside!" He adjusted her coat, then handed her the parcel.

"It's for you," she told him.

What mattered, she hadn't noticed.

He straightened the table to her; sat down opposite. "What's in it?"

It was ungraced. There was the look up. Always she sensed. Hardly ever what he reacted from, but expertly, the withdrawal. He wondered if her intuition stopped short of causes — or blocked admission of them.

"John, you're worried."

"Am I?"

He saw her lips press together.

And it was as he always must be, powerless not to exact the hurt he loathed held waiting between them. And hurting her, longing only to take her in his arms, to have her love. "They're gloves. Suede," she said. He looked down, the box gripped, in his shame, askew in his hands.

He heard his voice, "You always remember." — the attempt lavish.

Judith dropped her eyes, studied the menu. "Chicken salad and coffee?"

He placed the parcel under the chair, bending over; nodded.

"Were you busy? The office?" She put the card aside on the table.

It was now compensation.

"Usual."

Arenfeld's — their biggest account — had renewed contract.

"But Arenfeld's?"

"Yes," he said.

Judith gazed at him. "Aren't you glad?"

Of course he was glad.

"Of course I'm glad." He snapped his fingers at the passing waitress.

"It isn't *her fault,* John."

Was that supposed to be comic?

He broke from the spiral beginning twisting. Gave the order. The girl had interrupted service elsewhere, was servile, what was intolerable, courageous.

As soon as she left, Judith spoke. "What's got into you, John?"

"I'm sorry. What should get into me?"

She sat looking down, one hand in her lap. The other's thumb and finger followed back and forth the slimness between the ends of the fork. Why didn't he when he got this way keep away from Judith?

The girl brought the order.

They began to eat — still in silence.

Judith broke it. "John. You might tell me."

He looked at her, Judith, whom he loved. "I love you." It was said simply.

He saw her eyes widen, hesitate toward comedy — then gentle quickly. "I know you do."

To give himself, wholly, loving her as she must be loved, as love was, as worship that was the flesh, not to each other singly, but made one and a part of that which was not them and without which, and until, they were alone.

"Aren't you well?"

His jaw tightened. But, still, he used words. "That night."

Judith's lips opened, for a moment stayed, then she spoke softly, "But you did!"

Did! He felt his remonstrance surge so that it seemed words must fuse. "There *must* be some other word . . ."

"Darling, they'll hear you."

Down with the blinds for the remission of Sin. *And there was darkness over all the land.* He looked each side of their table. On the right hand, the woman chewed at lettuce, engrossed with the dangled strand; on the left, the girl with the rubber bosoms rattled coins down the chute. He looked back at Judith.

"Okay. Skip it."

She sat — bent over her food, her arms held close to her body, the velvet clown of a beret stuck on the top of her head. And always, it was there — the despair expert in Judith's eyes, uncomprehending, asking. Protection of her went through him so that he could have cried out — his head turning away, his eyes clenched, for the dark's answer — answer to the shame which was against life, which left their love betrayed — answer that would be a destroying, visible, seen, of himself offered, of no hurt to her — and through her love, she would know . . . Judith . . . who responded to his finger cut, a cold . . .

His eyes opening, it was the paper-spike he saw, in sharpness, vivid on the desk, the other side of the low glass partition. And as he sat, unmoving, it was to its passion he reached, his imagination reaching over, taking it, placing it in the center of their table, in front of Judith, even as her eyes saw it, the paper-spike — that was failure and meaning; to her, of no hurt. Opening his palm rigid above the spike, he stayed an instant — then struck down.

The spike pierced, came through the back of the hand.

His hand impaled, he told her quietly, "Don't you see, Judith?

I loved you, I loved you?"

And the paper-spike lasted until the ninth hour.

He broke the imagining — the edge of the laugh only, in his voice.

At the sound, Judith looked up, and — the fear, familiar to her eyes, waiting — he switched the irony to capitulation.

"Finished, darling?" he said. "Shall we go?"

MICHAEL BALLANTYNE

DINGLE BAY

Love, this autumn, this calm and crying shore,
these islands' plunging, sunlit sea
erect a bright blue tent of days,
pile cloud on cloud the green grass over,
where most of all the brilliant birds
slide, ring in the higher airs,
feather and sun as never before.

Then all the afternoon we stand
surrounded by summer in a haygold field,
while the hours turn over on their sides
and the sunset goes singing, o hear, o hear.
Stars prick in the slow, summer sky.

For this is the quiet time, the fields' quiet
anchorage of hayricks, the iceberg's white
tremendous ruin moving on the ocean's edge.

Film

Belle Pomer

FILM SHORTS — CANADIAN AND COMMERCIAL

At the presentation of the Canadian Film Awards for 1951, six of the award films were shown. From these few films, not all of them first in their class, it would hardly be possible to draw any general conclusions on Canadian films, or for that matter, on the award films as a whole. However, appraisal of each of the six films individually does give some glimpses of the work being done by independent film groups and the National Film Board.

Allowing for the scarcity of amateur films with enough coherence and unity of structure to make them eligible for consideration, *A Camper and his Canoe,* which won the award in the amateur class, is still much below expectation. A twelve-minute colour film produced by Camp Kawagama in Dorset, Ontario, as a training film for camp councillors, it illustrates the basic principles of paddling a canoe. But the few shots which display a little of the canoe's liquid grace are not sufficient to offset such basic defects as consistent underexposure and general dullness of presentation.

Ski à Québec, a twenty-minute publicity film produced by Abbé Maurice Proulx for the government of the Province of Quebec, and designed to attract ski enthusiasts to the province, won honourable mention in its class for excellence of photography. It does contain some vivid skiing sequences, in which the thrill of the sport and the beauty of the scene excite equal attention; there are outstanding shots of the ski jumps; and occasionally a simple scene — white snow, blue sky, black woods, a touch of red in the garb of the skier — which in composition and colour echoes the travel poster. In spite of the high level of photography, however, the film is too loosely strung together, and could be considerably improved by cutting.

Given honourable mention for general excellence of presentation, *The Fruitful Earth,* produced by Associated Screen News Ltd., of Montreal, proved to be altogether undistinguished, and completely lacking in that flow of movement which, except in attempts at special effects, is the basis of cinematic technique. The intention is to depict harvest time in rural Quebec; for this purpose, one detached picture after another is flashed on the screen. The result is a static little film

in which the monotony of technique is accentuated by the stereotyped commentary. In contrast to this, the National Film Board's *Man in the Peace Tower* shows polished and resourceful camera work from the first introductory shot. The subject of this short, which explains how the Dominion Carilloneur in Ottawa performs his task, is both interesting and novel; and the clever commentary, written and narrated by Lister Sinclair, only strikes a jarring note when it sinks now and then into false reverence.

Royal Journey, which has already been covered in an earlier review, won first award as a feature-length theatrical; and mention should also be made of Norman McLaren's two short stereoscopic films —*Around is Around* and *Now is the Time* — which were given a special award for research in this area of film-making. In both films McLaren combined his painting on film with stereoscopic technique, but only *Around is Around* had the charm and sprightliness appropriate to the medium. Considering that McLaren was aware of the limitations within which he would be forced to work, the conception of the second film was pretentious in the extreme.

In *Newfoundland Scene,* the Canadian film of the year 1951, we have an absorbing piece of work that has been shaped with real craftsmanship. In this presentation of Newfoundland life, there is implicit in every sequence the population's constant struggle for existence on the harsh and grudging island. The women of the coastal hamlets coax a few vegetables from the stony soil; the fishing is not only an industry, but an immediate and necessary source of food; many of the fishermen depend on whaling and seal-hunting to tilt the precariously-balanced economical scales in favour of survival. Those of us who are sheltered in large cities, in regions where nature is milder, or at least more generous, and the main problem of mankind is man, tend to forget the barren places of the earth where small groups still fight obstinately for a grim existence. Newfoundland is such a place, and Crawley Films Ltd., with quiet drama, sincere narrative, and expert photography, does full justice to the bleak beauty of the island and the fierce independence of its people.

With the exception of some of the National Film Board films, which are handled by Columbia Pictures, the Canadian shorts are very limited in distribution as far as commercial purposes are concerned. But although there is no indication that the movie-goer's nightmare — the Fitzgerald travelogue or Pete Smith Specialty — is in any danger of passing out of existence, the chances of meeting with a

more acceptable commercial offering have increased steadily in recent years. Short films that range from impressionistic studies to straightforward documentary, with something individual to say, or a distinctive method of presentation, are turning up frequently.

It is true that the small specializing movies-houses inflict their share of agony with pseudo-cultural shorts; but they also bring us delightful little films like the one produced by Les Films du Compas, entitled *Balzac.* To tell the story of Balzac's life and career, the film makes use of cartoons of the time, prints and engravings, and numerous portrait studies. Since these in themselves are static, and have no depth or movement, the camera technique is somewhat confined; but the material used is itself so fascinating that there is not the slightest ebb of interest. The experience is rather like that of poring over old books; and the film as a whole sketches not only Balzac's personality, but the rivalries and influences of his period.

Among the unusual film shorts exhibited by those theatres more directly in line with Hollywood distribution are Walt Disney's True-Life Adventure series. *Seal Island,* the first of the series, is a powerful colour documentary which describes the life-cycle of the seal, and centres on the annual stay at the island where the seals mate and rear the young. The masterly photography and dignity of treatment have an emotional impact that leaves the audience at once satisfied and yet disturbed — disturbed in the way that men inevitably are on the few occasions when they are truly impressed with the workings of natural forces.

In *Beaver Island,* Disney makes both himself and his audience more comfortable. The beaver's story is on a much smaller scale, and it is here that the practice is begun (and unfortunately continued) of drawing 'cute' analogies between the animal and the human being. The use of colour in this film is often crude, and altogether, *Beaver Island* is a disappointment after *Seal Island.* But the two most recent of the series, *Nature's Half Acre,* which deals with insects and *Water Birds,* are different in quality from either of the preceding films. Both retain the 'amusing' commentary; but Disney has swung away from strict realism of treatment to play with colour and design in a way that reminds one of the vigour of his early work with animated cartoons. In that field, his fountain of creativity has been dry for some years. But if the narrator and cheap musical effects are shut out of mind, *Nature's Half Acre* and *Water Birds* can dazzle with their display of Disney's talent.

BOOKS

RETURN TO CHESTERTON, by Maisie Ward. Sheed and Ward. $4.25.

Eight years ago the publishing house of Sheed and Ward issued the official biography of G. K. Chesterton. It was written by Maisie Ward, who in private life is Mrs. Frank Sheed. The resources of the family firm have now been brought to bear on the fresh material which began to stream in from correspondents as soon as the biography reached the public. New tours of inquiry and new interviews on both sides of the Atlantic have agreeably culminated in a new volume.

It is more personal, less concerned with G. K. C. as a writer — though it contains some amusing unpublished work, such as an essay on the pronunciation of "tomato", in which alleged verses from several poets, exquisitely parodied, are cited in support of contending schools. The original biography should of course be read first; but the return is made by otherwise unvisited paths, which command perspectives well worth a look.

"Perspectives." It is a word you might use about a mountain. Chesterton impressed upon human memories the image of a colossal bulk. Because he was a physical mountain, it seems like a silly joke to refer to him as a literary or spiritual mountain. Still, the metaphor is so just that the equivocations it leads to are merely trite. He covered so much ground. He rose to such altitudes. He surveyed such immense vistas. He was so multi-coloured. He faced so many ways. Poetry, fiction, essays, drama, biography, literary criticism, politics, sociology, apologetics, theology: the list of all he wrote is bewildering. Even when the famous style became mannered and mechanical, as towards the end it did, the exuberance went on and the wealth of ideas showed little sign of exhaustion. When comes such another?

One of Chesterton's commentators is a Canadian, but on the whole he is not well known here, except by a few poems — "The Donkey," for instance, and possibly "Lepanto." These are admirable as far as they go. I suppose people also read his dectective stories, where he exploited the brilliant notion that an intelligent priest, having listened to thousands of confessions, might be exceptionally well equipped to solve crimes. But most of the stories, one must frankly admit, are exercises in sleight-of-hand. There is some very acute obser-

vation in them, but the central idea, whatever it may be, often loses half its impact because of the incredible plot. The stories give a distorted picture of their creator. Father Brown, though a good detective, is a questionable publicity man.

If Maisie Ward leads a few Canadian readers to inspect or re-inspect that astonishing battalion of books, she will have achieved a valuable result over and above her felicitous presentation of the figure behind them. And these new readers will understand more and more clearly why Bernard Shaw called his popish friend a "colossal genius."

They will also meet with the stimulus and challenge of novelty. Chesterton once remarked that you could almost define the Victorian age in literature by saying that Francis Thompson stood outside it. Perhaps his main relevance for this country is that you could convey much of Canadian civilisation by saying that Chesterton stands outside it. He himself, a diehard Little Englander, exhibited an odd coldness towards the Dominions; and the Dominions, notably this one, return the compliment.

Look at him any way you please, he is alien. After his conversion he wrote superb stuff like *The Everlasting Man* in intellectual championship of the Catholic Church. In Canada, the intellectual convert, though just beginning to appear, is still a rare bird. Again, Chesterton denounced the sham royalism of modern England which paid lip-service to the Crown while depriving it of power. But Canada is still royalist solely because the Crown is powerless. Chesterton attacked capitalism because he really did not believe in capitalism. Those few Canadians who attack it only want to substitute the State type for the private type. Chesterton distrusted progress and opposed feminism. Canadians accept both. Chesterton was an allround man of letters, in the very first rank, who chose to be a journalist. Canadians have no room for such people on the staffs of their newspapers. Chesterton was a sparkling and happy-hearted conversationalist in the great tradition. While Canadians . . .

Geoffrey Ashe.

THE ROMANTIC AGONY, by Mario Praz, translated from the Italian by Angus Davidson. Second edition, Toronto (Oxford University Press). $5.50.

For almost twenty years *The Romantic Agony* has been an indispensable guide through the murkier depths of the nineteenth century

erotic sensibility; even without the forty odd pages of additional notes, this new edition would have been very welcome. Even when judged by the standards of a generation which has seen academic library shelves crammed to overflowing with the products of laborious research into the minutiae of literary history, Praz's achievement is an impressive one. As he parades before us the sexual horrors that fascinated so many of the romantics — the cruel Medusan beauties, the satanic and sadistic heroes, the willing victims of feminine frightfulness — the student thanks God that somebody has made it unnecessary for him to read more than a dozen or so of the hundreds of works whose titles appear in the index. Praz may claim to have read more bad books in more languages than any man now living. One would be tempted to pity him if it were not for the relish with which he seems to have approached his task.

That last sentence is not merely a captious sneer, for it draws attention to an important defect in Praz's scholarly equipment. Even in a book which claims to be no more than a monograph on "the education of sensibility" in the nineteenth century one expects to find the author's evidence and conclusions modified by some effort to distinguish between good and bad in the works subjected to his scrutiny. Without such a show of critical discrimination to guide him, the reader has no point of reference from which to judge the evidence. Praz gives us plenty of *obiter dicta*: he dismisses de Sade (rightly, I believe) as lacking "the most elementary qualities of a writer" and sees his whole merit to consist in his "having left documents illustrative of the mythological, infantile phase of psycho-pathology . . . the first systematized account of sexual perversions". (p. x) Assertion, however, is no substitute for demonstration, and it is demonstration that Praz does not give us.

That is why one feels uneasy as the catalogues of writers are reeled off. In what meaningful sense can Heinse, Beckford, Keats, Wackenroder, De Quincey, Gautier, Swinburne and Wilde be jumbled together as "exotics"? (pp. 201-3) Is the uneasiness lessened when we find Praz discussing seriously the "just remark" of Brie that "there is a certain resemblance between the exotic and the mystic", because each aims to project himself out of the present, temporal world? (p. 201) Are there not several vital critical distinctions to be made before one can safely compare Keats and the heroine of Pétrus Borel's shocker *Dina la belle juive* because they both glut their sorrows "on a morning rose . . . or on the wealth of globèd peonies"? (p. 133)

Praz compares his task, in *The Romantic Agony,* to that of someone who, "in Poe's well-known story, examined merely the crack which runs zig-zag across the front of the House of Usher, without troubling about its general architecture". If he is really willing to have his book judged by its achievement of such a limited aim, then we may declare *The Romantic Agony* to be a complete success. I should hesitate to recommend it, however, to anyone whose reading in the European literature of the nineteenth century was not wide enough to permit him to make the discriminations and the reservations which the uncritical inclusiveness of Praz's method demands.

Neil Compton.

TO OUR READERS

We are pleased to announce that we have reached the objective of $1500 which we set for our guarantors' fund for Volume 5, Numbers 1 to 6. We greatly appreciate the continued support of readers in many parts of Canada, and we wish to take this opportunity to thank all the donors.

As the last issue in Volume 5, the college issue, will be published shortly, we have already begun soliciting donations for Volume 6. Steadily increasing printing costs have made it necessary for us to raise the objective for the new volume to $2000. We must obtain at least this amount if we are to continue Northern Review in its present format, and we urge our readers to contribute again if they can possibly do so. A list of donations already received will be published in the magazine in the near future.

Due to the increase in costs, we will be unable to make any awards for poetry and fiction during 1952. However, if the response to the new appeal warrants it, we are planning to make a nominal payment for manuscripts beginning in January.

The present issue had to be delayed until our fund objective for Volume 5 was reached. Subscriptions have been adjusted so that readers will receive their full quota of six issues.

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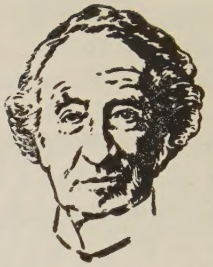

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